This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

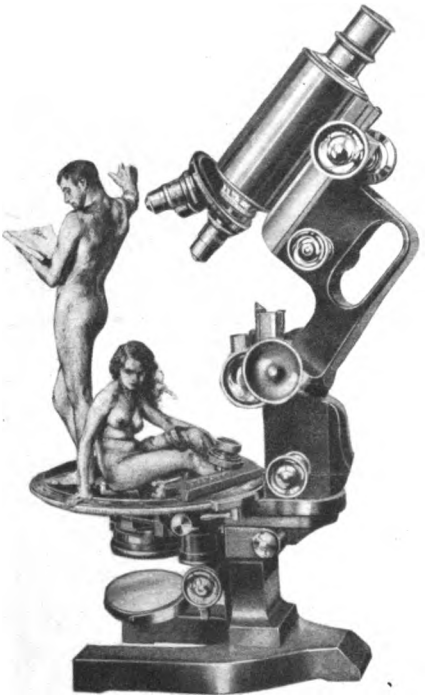
AL
3641
2.20

WIDENER LIBRARY
HX 5A26 U

Digitized by Google

AL 3641.2.20

SHORT STORY COLLECTION



WINWARD PRESCOTT

Harvard College Library

W

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

TIM TALKS

BY

TIM THRIFT

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press
1920

Digitized by Google

AL 3641.2.20

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
BEQUEST OF
WINWARD PRESCOTT
JANUARY 27, 1933

COPYRIGHT, 1919
BY
TIM THRIFT

T

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

	Page
Cause — and Effect	11
That Something	14
The Never-Lighted Fire	17
The Circus	20
They Say:	23
Make-Believe	25
If I Knew You and You Knew Me	27
A June Night	29
The Talent	31
P. P.	34
Imagination	37
My Friend	39
The Kill-Joy	41
The Clock Watcher	43
Objectives	46
The Vacant Chair	49
Green Pastures	51
A Memorial Day Epic	53
"Dictated But Not Read"	57
What Is Success?	59
Changing Gears	62
The Back-Door-Man	65
A Pipe	68
The Old Swimming Hole	71
The Broken Heart	74
The Stopping of the Clock	78
A May Fancy	81
Loyalty	84
Writers of Letters	87
Too Late!	90
The Race of Men To Be	93
The Forgotten Child	96

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

FRIEND READER:

FRANKLY, the stories, sketches, essays—call them what you will—that make up this little volume were written for the folks who are members of the business family to which I belong. And because they were written by one of the family, I presume, they were kind enough to say there was something of good in them and urged that others be given the opportunity to read—and perchance enjoy—them.

Originally published as a column feature of a weekly, under the heading of "Tim Talks," as Tim Talks they are presented to you. I hope you find pleasure and profit in them. They're not clever or brilliant—just homely little skits that may appeal to your heart, as they have appealed to the hearts of the fine big family to which I here dedicate them.

—Tim Thrift

Cleveland
1919

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CAUSE — AND EFFECT

DROP a pebble into a placid pool and the ripple it causes goes, in an ever-widening circle, to its farthest edge.

Drop a thought into a receptive mind and the effect it causes goes, in an ever-increasing measure, to its farthest mental horizon.

* * * * * * * * * *

Years ago, in our town, for one week during the summer, a street faker held forth of an evening in the public square. He sold a mysterious concoction which he gave the high-sounding name of "Elixir of Life." According to the lecture which invariably preceded the sale, it would cure all the pains and aches to which mankind and womankind might be heir.

To attract a crowd within the circle of light cast by the flaring gasoline torches on his gaudily painted wagon, he would give a talk on phrenology, illustrating his points with the aid of a human skull and such small-boy subjects as he could induce to aid him.

I recall one such a night and occasion, when, having an evening of leisure on my hands, I joined the village folk congregated about his motley equipage. He had just reached the point in his phrenological discussion where he required a human subject to operate upon. He called for volunteers.

After a moment's hesitation, a small, unkempt figure mounted the steps that led to the wagon bed where he stopped and stood beside him. With that good-natured ridicule which is a common attribute of small

Digitized by Google

town people, the crowd nudged one another and laughed hilariously.

The "subject" who had volunteered was the son of Pete, the village drunkard — probably regarded as the sorriest specimen of the rising generation in the environs of the town. "If he's got any bumps on his head," said a voice near me, "the old man put 'em there."

The boy stood blinking in the light of the torches — a typical waif of the streets, such as might be a common sight in cities, but a *rara avis* in our parts. He was plainly nervous and ill at ease, yet there was a certain touch of courage in his daring this publicity that caught my fancy. I watched with livelier interest.

Our friend, the phrenologist, knew something of the psychology of crowds, for he was quick to take advantage of this opportunity to play upon the rough an ready humor of his audience.

His nimble fingers played over the boy's head; he turned him this way and that; he tilted his chin, then lowered it — the while he kept up a running fire of comment and explanation that convulsed the bystanders. Here was a rare specimen — mental-motive type — a student — an executive — a leader — benevolent — courageous — industrious — forceful — dominant. So he ran on until he saw that the crowd wearied of the jest, when he abruptly dismissed the boy and turned enthusiastically to extolling the merits of that peerless remedy, "Elixir of Life."

The villagers watched him, but I watched the boy. Why, I do not know, but it seemed to me that I caught

Digitized by Google

something in his face, a new light in his eyes, an awakening of something dormant. He slipped from my sight, however, as I looked after him, and the incident was forgotten in the press of the weeks that followed.

* * * * * * * * * *

All I have narrated occurred years ago.

This summer I visited again the old town. A street faker held forth in the square. So almost identical was he with the one of long ago that the incident of the boy came back to me.

I turned to the "old inhabitant" who was with me.

"By the way," I asked, "whatever became of old Pete's boy?"

He laughed.

"Funny thing — that," he replied. "Ever hear of the Hon. Henry Porter Donnellson, who's made such a stir up at the capitol as a representative of the state's big business interests? Well, that's him."

* * * * * * * * * *

The answer? I refer you to the two statements I made before I started this story.

Digitized by Google

THAT SOMETHING

HE sat in his favorite chair, his slippered feet crossed, an old briar pipe gripped in his teeth. The evening paper lay, unread, beside him. He gazed, almost without movement, into the darkening shadows of the room — gazed fixedly, as one who sees visions, as one who dreams dreams.

But within him was tumult. Not the tumult of passion or despair, but the tumult of a mind that cannot come to a decision. The tumult of doubt, uncertainty, misgivings. It had waged within him for hours and still he seemed no nearer the solution.

That morning the call had come, unexpected, out of a clear sky, as such things sometimes come. He had been going along the even course of his daily work doing the things he had learned to do, and doing them well, as he did all things, and then the voice spoke.

And the voice was the voice of another business — a business that had watched him, unbeknown, for a long time, and had weighed him in the scale of its standard of men. And the voice was a voice that said "I am Opportunity" and "I am Advancement" and "I am Financial Success" and "I am Your Future." And the voice was a voice that had a winning cadence and an inflection that stressed things that were pleasant to hear and glorious to contemplate.

So the voice had spoken and the man had listened. But his was not an impulsive nature. Reason and logic and saneness had ruled his life — had brought him to the enviable position of the man who is sought — and they continued to guide him.

Digitized by Google

Hence through the hours of the day he had turned the proposition over in his mind; had weighed it; had investigated it; had discovered its weaknesses; had developed its strength; had given it the judicial consideration that perhaps what might be the most important step in his life deserved.

With it he had compared his present business — all that it meant to him, all that it might mean to him in the future. He had balanced the two — the old and the new — the tried and the untried — the developed and the undeveloped.

And the decision stood, in his fair judgment, as two to one in favor of the new.

But tonight — on the verge of that decision which would mean another life and other ways and strange activities — his thoughts were in a turmoil. He found himself again piecing together, with logic and reason, those deductions, that analysis, his conclusions.

Then, suddenly, THAT SOMETHING shot across his chaotic mind like a flaming meteor. Instantly he was sobered. Gone the glint of the gold and the rosy glow of the new prospect. Gone the lure of the call and the seduction of the voice that phrased it glowingly. Gone every consideration — minute and immense — save THAT SOMETHING.

An hour longer he gazed into the shadows — now the shadows of night — as one who sees visions, as one who dreams dreams — then with a half-whimsical smile on his face — a face that was calm with decision — he picked up the paper beside him and turned to the news of the day.

Digitized by Google

On the morrow he answered the voice—and the answer was "No."

THAT SOMETHING!

If you do not know what it is, my friend, I'm afraid I never can tell you, for THAT SOMETHING is of the spirit and not of the flesh and it can come only to those who understand it. If you understand what it is, then you know. If you do not understand, you never can understand.

Kismet — perhaps — but truth.

Digitized by Google

THE NEVER-LIGHTED FIRE

HE had made his pile. Only a few hours before he had closed with the syndicate he had been negotiating with for months, and now he could loaf — and play — the rest of his life.

As he sat in his suite at the Giltmore, cigar in mouth, relaxed after the strain of the preceding months, he felt like pinching himself — it was all so like a dream.

The past years unrolled before him. As far back as his mind reached he could not remember when he hadn't worked. He had had no boyhood — no youth — no young manhood. It seemed all those things in life other men had had were denied him. Always he had labored — early and late — until he had made his strike — until those few months agone when he had wrung from the fickle Goddess of Fortune a belated golden smile.

He was alone in the world. Starting life as an orphan, he was an orphan still, for never in the passing years had he felt he dared assume the burden and responsibility of a family. And now, at the threshold of the two score years and ten that Time had chalked against the tally of his life, he was at last independent, free to do as he willed, master of his future.

Life had left him few illusions. He had seen too much of the sham beneath the veneer. He had tasted the dregs in the cup. The barb of adversity had entered his soul. He sat there — amid luxury long-denied — with the opened eyes of fifty — and yet he dared to dream!

Digitized by Google

Money wasn't everything — that he knew. But he knew, too, that in a sense it was power. And he believed sufficiently in it, and in himself, to dream that it would buy the one thing his lonely heart had hungered for through all the years — the play-days of youth — those careless, happy, idling days that had been the portion of so many men and he had never known.

* * * * * * * * * *

Where — or how — or when — the Girl entered his new life need not concern us. She came one day — like a breath of the Springtime of life, let us say — and he "fell" for her. Perhaps if it had not been this Girl, it would have been some other — for when one seeks, one finds — so he found her.

She was a daughter of the City, skilled in the ways of men and armed cap-a-pie. And she found him the strangest man she had ever met. But with all her acumen, combined with an intuition that was the birthright of her sex, she did not know the reason was because he was so genuine.

She accepted him with the grain of salt, the reluctance of faith, that she accorded all men.

He, in turn, was bewildered. This was his play-time of life. He had earned, through unremitting toil, the right to his youth. With gold, with glowing heart, with outstretched arms, he welcomed back the lad of the yesterdays — but he came not. Once in a while he caught glimpses of him — he even heard snatches of his laughter — the care-free lilt of his voice — saw the merry light in his eyes — yet when he would have embraced him, he was gone — a vague shape in the shadows.

Digitized by Google

He could not play. The pity of it! — he could not play. Life had left too stern an impress upon him. He was a stranger to his youth and when he bade it return it was afraid — afraid of that grave demeanor, that care-worn face, that disillusionment in the tired eyes of the man it had grown to be.

So our story draws to a close — a tale untold. For the girl — proffered the wealth of the Indies — the wealth of a hungry heart that sought naught save the youth of her — with the canny lack-o'-sight of the life she had led, mistook gold for dross — and the end of our story is lost in its very beginning.

* * * * * * * * * *

Which teaches — if we must have a lesson — that youth is youth, and age is age — and never the twain shall meet — to paraphrase the words of one who, too, knows life.

Digitized by Google

THE CIRCUS

MY little daughter took me to the circus last evening. I teased her so persistently she couldn't refuse. So we went, hand-in-hand, as two children should go.

It was my first circus in *fifteen* years — think of it! Fifteen years is a very long time for one to go without seeing a circus. But, you see, I've been out of luck. Whenever a circus came to town it seemed all the little folks had made their plans and I couldn't get any of them to take me. Of course there were the big folks; but one can't have any fun at a circus with big folks — they're so absurd, so matter-of-fact — they can't make-believe at all. Big folks see too much and they just haven't the imagination anyway.

It was a three-ring circus and I'm glad it was, for if it had been a six-ring circus there would have been a lot of things we'd've missed. But, you bet, we didn't miss anything. We had reserved seats right in front of the middle ring — and — oh yes — we had ice cream cones and lemonade and peanuts and everything, too. I tell you when my daughter takes me to a circus she knows how to do the job up right.

Well, I'm not going to tell you all about that circus, even though it looked as if I might, when I started out. If you want to see what I saw and have the fun I had and become the small boy I became — you go and get your daughter or somebody's daughter to take you to a circus. Only — I warn you — don't be foolish and select a grown-up daughter. They just won't do.

Digitized by Google

But I will relent and tell you this much. Maybe it's just to whet your old dried-up anticipation to a keen edge — maybe it's just to make you jealous —

Anyway —

We saw elephants and camels and lions and tigers and hyenas and zebras and a lot of other funny animals whose names I can't spell.

We saw the loveliest ladies in pink tights and spangled dresses on snow-white horses and coal-black horses.

We saw tight-rope walkers and trapeze performers and bare-back riders and aerial artists and tumblers and jugglers.

We saw funny clowns — a whole lot of them — and trick donkeys that nobody could ride.

We saw ponies and monkeys and dogs that all performed together and did the most amazing things.

We saw elephants that danced and rolled over and acted just as if they knew as much as you and I.

We saw chariot races that made us get right up from our seats and cheer and everything.

Perhaps we missed some things. As I think back I'm afraid we did. You see there were so many things to see. But we sat there and munched peanuts and kept our four eyes just as busy as we could keep them. I'll leave it to you if we could have done more.

Every little while the ring-master would come out in the center ring, right in front of us, and make an announcement. You bet the whole show stopped when he talked. One time he told about the big concert

Digitized by Google

they were going to have after the main show. He said they couldn't think of departing from the time-honored custom of all circuses, so they just had to have a concert. But, he explained, they called it a "Revue." Anyway there were to be a lot of pretty girls — and — sh-sh! — some of them were European "shimmy" dancers.

I *did* want to stay — the tickets were only fifteen cents — but my daughter didn't think it was quite proper.

So we went home.

I can't tell you how much I enjoyed that circus. As one grows up one gets too few pleasures like that, I think.

But I did tell her —

She said she enjoyed it too — but most of the acts had been at Keith's, hadn't they?

Ah me!

Digitized by Google

THEY SAY:

I LIKED his looks. He was wholesome. There was something in his clear eyes that suggested tender strength; something in the resolute set of his shoulders that said "I am master of myself."

"Who is that man?" I queried a casual acquaintance near by.

He named him. Then he leaned toward me confidentially: "*They say* —," and he repeated some idle, malicious gossip that had a sting in it.

She had never appeared to better advantage. The play had been made for her and she, it seemed, had been made for the play. Through the three acts of the tragedy she held her audience spell-bound. One feared to whisper, lest he break the enchantment of such art. It was a triumph — a new crown of laurel for the greatest tragedienne of the age.

Then — I hear a murmur of voices from the orchestra chairs behind me. Faint, but clear, I heard her name spoken — a pause — then, with a rising inflection — "*They say* —." I caught no more save a hushed, but knowing, laugh.

They say —

Who are *they* that say? THEY — the great unknown! THEY — the subterfuge of some malicious mind! THEY — the anonymous messenger of the slanderer! THEY — the Borgia with a viper's tongue!

They say —

How — *thoughtlessly*, I shall say — we preface many of our remarks with those qualifying words. As though

Digitized by Google

with their utterance we neatly and adroitly passed the responsibility to another, and, consequently, felt free to say things we would otherwise never voice.

It's a habit — a dangerous habit — a habit with potential harm in it that is incalculable. For with that which almost invariably follows our "They say —," we create mistrust, breed suspicion, destroy confidence, assassinate character and do irreparable injury.

And it's all so useless. We simply traffic in gossip, in slander, in defamation. We gain naught and we lose much, for some of our self-respect is sacrificed every time we utter those fateful words.

We, as a nation, should have learned our lesson. It is easy to recall the rumors that went the rounds of the country. Rumors of atrocities on the part of the Allies. Rumors of Red Cross bungling. Rumors of this and rumors of that — propaganda to shake our confidence in our leaders — our friends — ourselves. And all prefaced with those significant words — "They say."

Take this little preachment to heart. When next the phrase comes to your lips, deny it utterance. If you will not sponsor what you are about to express — or if you can't place responsibility for it upon a definite person or source — let it remain unsaid.

Do this, and you'll be happier and you'll not rob others of their happiness.

Digitized by Google

MAKE-BELIEVE

WELL I know that the child heart is a priceless possession. Think what it means to be able to set out in quest of adventure in the realms of Make-Believe and find new beauties opening up at every hand! Who would ask more of Happiness! What matter it if in the end — at the return from the journey — there comes that inevitable tarnishing and the gold of romance is only after all the brass of fact! Has not one had the even fleeting pleasure of golden hours and the heights and depths of imagination?

The memories of our childhood days should be relived and not treasured up and laid away in lavender, as fond mothers lay away their children's toys in old bureau drawers and sometimes steal away to cry o'er them in twilight afternoons. Yesterday should ever be around the corner from today and never difficult to find. What delight to let the feet retrace their steps and wander back again along the idling paths — paths unknown to those prosaic ones who never turn their eyes from mere material things.

If you cannot renew your youth at will you have failed to learn the secret of happiness, for therein is the perennial font and the waters that banish care and responsibilities. All things in the Land of Make-Believe seem rose-hued and alluring. The Jack-o'-Dreams may build only castles of air, but his mansions bring him a far greater measure of joy than those built by the materialist. The sunshine glints the windows and the breezes of the eternal spring are wafted through the rooms. With

Digitized by Google

him enchantment and charm go hand in hand. Matter it, then, where they lead him!

I have only pity for those souls who, having nothing to look back upon, have nothing to look forward to. Long ago they closed the door of their youth and the bright vista is theirs no more. Only before them is the wearisome road and the mountains beyond. Year after year they have sealed their heart to the sweet scents of the Garden of Dreams, to the vale across the borderland. Threadbare of soul they are and threadbare they must remain unto the end.

You have within you the romance of youth. For you there is a garden and a presence awaiting you there. But is it a beautiful garden, a veritable garden of dreams, and is the voice of the presence soft and sweet and low — or is it a weed-grown garden, a garden of desolation, and is the voice of the presence a voice that is never heard?

You are the one who knows!

Digitized by Google

IF I KNEW YOU AND YOU KNEW ME —

ONE night — so the story goes — when Doctor Johnson had foregathered with his good friend, Oliver Goldsmith, at the old Mitre Tavern, he turned to him and exclaimed:

"Goldy — d'ye see that man over there? I hate him!"

"Hate him!" ejaculated Goldsmith — "why, bless my soul, you don't even *know* him."

"Ah, that's just the point." said Johnson. "If I *knew* him, I'd like him."

The story's good enough to be true. I hope it is.

How many folks we'd like if we only *knew* them; how many folks would like us if they only *knew* us!

We go our ways through the days, touching elbows, brushing past, giving scarce a glance. Sometimes, like Dr. Johnson, we hate. More often we simply take a dislike; are tolerant or indifferent. Our attitude is based on — what? Vague impressions, based on intangibles. We simply do not *know*.

The greatest study of mankind is man. To begin that study with yourself means to develop personality, and the development of personality means the development of the personalities you meet.

Do you ever stand on a crowded street and watch the crowds go by? I do. There is no more fascinating pastime, for each human being in that throng is a counterpart of you—over, equal to, or under your

Digitized by Google

development, spiritually, mentally, physically — subject to the same emotions that move you. You are creatures of a common destiny.

And if you could but *know* them — each one — what a world of experience would be yours — to what heights might you rise — to what depths might you descend!

The war taught men to know one another as they had not known before. It scrambled together in the great cantonments men of every race and creed, of every condition of servitude — rich and poor, high and low — and in the constant association of the days and with the wonderful fusing influence of a single purpose, they learned to *know* one another. There a man was stripped to a *man*, and stood revealed for what he was. Some of the mighty fell and some of the lowly rose. Out of it all came a common fellowship that will bring miracles to pass in years to come.

How often you have had little regard for some one, and then a common cause — the work of a club to which you both belonged, for instance — threw you together. You were amazed, perhaps, to find that here, awaiting your cultivation, was a friendship rich in possibilities. You had simply come into the *know*.

Let us not take snap judgment of others. As the saying goes: "There is so much good in the worst of us, and so much bad in the best of us —."

After all, we linger on the way but a little while as we pass along, and there is so much to be learned in the journey through life, that it is well worth while to acquire some of it through knowing our comrades of the road.

Digitized by Google

A JUNE NIGHT

THIS should have been written months ago, I presume; but old man Winter kept hanging around the house of Spring in our town this year until her daughter, June, never had a chance. She turned a cold shoulder to her admirers and sent them scurrying to the fireside to thaw out.

September had no such provocation. And September has given us all we would have received from June had she been in a kindlier mood.

Last night was as perfect a June night as that of any June I can remember. The air was soft and balmy, a faint breeze sent the trees a-whispering, delicate perfumes of a thousand flowers stole through the senses, myriad insects droned a lullaby. Over all a full moon cast a silver radiance. It was a night for lovers — romance, mystery and charm blent in a perfect symphony.

It was upon a night such as this, long ago, that you, in the thrall of the first romance of youth, strolled in the garden with Her.

Light your pipe, stretch out in your arm chair, old codger, and let memory paint that picture in your mind.

You can see Her now as she was that night — a slim, girlish figure, dressed in some soft white dress. She walked demurely by your side and a slender hand rested on your arm.

You couldn't analyze your feelings then, old codger, and you can't analyze them now, even though the years

Digitized by Google

have brought you keen perceptions. You were in love — in love with youth — with life — with the world — with HER! And about you was the spell of a night in June — a night made for such as you — a night when it was vouchsafed you should be closer to the best in you than at any time in after life — save one.

You kissed Her! The first kiss! You don't know how or when or why it happened. As the most natural thing in the world — as the only thing that was to be — you turned to Her and she to you. Something in the eyes of both — something each saw in that divine instant — revealed the eternal truth — that she was yours and you were hers. She swayed toward you, as gently as a flower is swayed in the breeze — and your lips met!

Cherish that picture, old case-hardened codger, for life paints it but once for a man. Stained as you are with the years, surfeited as you may be with sensations, there never was, and there never will be, one moment that can hold the exquisite pleasure of that instant of revelation in a garden in June in the long ago.

"Piffle!" you exclaim.

Is it?

Ask the girl of the garden — she's there by your side.

Ask your son — he's there in the garden, with Her.

Ask yourself — the self that lives inside that old shell of you — the shell life has made that the kernel might be kept sweet.

Digitized by Google

THE TALENT

PERHAPS it was the day — rainy and drear; perhaps it was the aftermath of an hour with a group of brilliant and successful men at the club; perhaps it was a touch of morbid introspection; perhaps it was a melancholy induced by a combination of little happenings, stretching over the days — each trivial in itself. but in total almost overwhelmingly depressive.

Thompson — the name will serve as well as any — was blue. Not touched with the azure of such a spell of blues as comes to most mortals upon occasion, but in the depths of indigo blues — a dangerous mental hazard.

Possessing uncommon common sense he sat down to analyze his condition.

His day at the office had been trying, but no more so than scores of other days he could recollect.

His family affairs were pacific. There were little annoyances — true! — but they amounted to no more than the average give and take he had found made up the course of married life.

His friends had not changed. He knew some he could count upon, some he could not. Still, all in all, they averaged well.

What, then, was the trouble? Why this sudden, acute depression? Was it dissatisfaction with himself, with others, with his surroundings, his future?

He could not reason it out. His thoughts were in turmoil.

Digitized by Google

Then, suddenly, he remembered a parable he had heard his father read time and again on quiet Sunday evenings, when the family was gathered 'round for an hour of Scriptures. He groped for the theme — *the parable of the talents.*

That was it! There was the answer to his state of mind. It all came to him quite clearly. This was the culmination of a store of little envies. It stretched through the years. He could see how he had added to it bit by bit until it had grown into a monstrous thing — quite the greatest bogy he had ever met.

He picked up, one by one, the threads that made the tangled skein of his thoughts.

First, there was the great singer he had heard. He could not sing like that; he could not sing at all.

Next, there was the musician he had listened to with rapt attention. If only he could play like that. He could not tell one note from another.

Then the orator who had held him spell-bound. Ah, to be able to talk like that. He had never made a public speech in his life.

So he reviewed — groping into the past — the things he had seen, the things he had heard, the things he had read, and the things he had envied. And it came to him quite clearly, after a time, that he had envied each and every talent he had seen displayed — envied until black depression had come as a consequence.

He felt he had no talent. There was not one thing he did well. All about him were men and women richly endowed with natural gifts, while he was less

Digitized by Google

than average — lowly, mean, impoverished! It was unfair! Why could he not have had at least one talent — one thing that would distinguish him from the common-place!

He was a useless member of society —

* * * * * * * * * *

They gathered at the bier to pay a last tribute to the dead. It was a sorrowful company; from far and wide they had come. And in whispers thus they spoke of him:

"What a loss he will be to the community. He was so talented. He knew, as no one I know knew, how to *serve*. He had a talent for knowing just what to say and what to do. He always did the right thing at the right time. I almost envy him the heritage of the name he will leave his children. Such as he is rare — we shall not soon see his like again."

* * * * * * * * * *

Talents are relative — mistake not your own!

Digitized by Google

P. P.

THERE was a subtle scent of autumn in the air. The trees had begun to change to those somber tints of brown and red and gold that are the glory of the waning year. A soft haze turned perspectives of town and country to pastels of some master brush. Borne on the vagrant breeze came the tang of burning leaves —

By such signs as these I knew the time had come. And yet — I did not need them — for in my soul was a yearning that naught else would satisfy — within me was a void that naught else could fill —

I could get it — that I knew — for I had investigated before I built my hopes too high. So I made my lunch a frugal meal — that I might be the better prepared when it came — that I might satiate myself, so to speak.

When the time came — when I was ready, aye, primed, for it —I called my garcon to my side — I whispered in his ear — his face lighted with understanding — he nodded sagely — he departed.

I sat back in my chair. Anticipation sent pleasant shivers over me. I lit a fragrant cigarette, inhaled, exhaled — and then — in the nebulous cloud of the smoke — I saw —

* * * * * * * * * *

The kitchen was old, raftered, roomy. Row upon row of shining pots and pans graced its walls. Strung across its length, above the head, were little clumps of fragrant herbs that spiced the air. It was a place to make glad the heart of an epicure.

Digitized by Google

At a big table in the center of this room stood a little, white-haired, rosy-cheeked, cheery old lady — the genius of the place. About her were crocks and tins and spoons and shakers. Her sleeves were rolled up. On her blue gingham apron were spots and flecks of flour. She deftly rolled the dough on a board before her.

Presently she paused, drew a number of pans toward her and with the skill of an artist fitted and shaped the dough into each. From a big crock at her side she ladled a rich brown mass until each tin was filled to the brim.

At one side of the kitchen was an old-fashioned brick oven. To this she turned, threw open the door and thrust in her hand. Satisfied, she placed the pans in the oven and closed the door carefully. On her face was a whimsical smile and she hummed an old tune under her breath as she began other tasks of the day.

Now and again she opened the oven door and inspected her work. At length she was quite satisfied. With a broad paddle she drew out the pans and carefully deposited them on a shelf outside the window.

There they stood — in tempting array — six of them — a triumph of culinary art — a banquet fit for a king!

With the cream and tan of their flaky crust was blent the yellow and gold and brown of their face, and wafted from them was an odor indescribable — an odor that traveled across the miles, through the years, and

Digitized by Google

assailed my nostrils like some incense from the vanished past of boyhood days —

* * * * * * * * * *

I came to myself with a start. My cigarette was burning my fingers. The garcon was approaching the table. He laid a plate before me. On it reposed — in lean, watery, dyspeptic, anæmic dignity — a piece of —

"What is this?" I demanded, with irate eye.

"A piece of home-made pumpkin pie, sir," he said suavely.

"The hell it is!" I ejaculated.

After all, gentle reader, can you blame me?

Digitized by Google

IMAGINATION

JOHN HENRY possessed a vivid imagination.

For instance —

If there was a cloud in the sky of a fair day he imagined it would rain before night.

If there was a twinge of pain in his "tummy" he imagined he would have to undergo an operation for appendicitis.

If he drank a cup of coffee after six p. m. he imagined he would toss through a sleepless night.

And thus it went.

There was nothing in his life, from sunrise to sunset, that his imagination did not seize upon, feed upon and grow upon.

Folks said he was a pessimist. But he wasn't. It was his imagination — that vivid imagination that possessed him.

So John Henry went through life — building bridges that he never crossed — anticipating trouble that never happened — seeing things that did not exist.

Finally he died — and you can imagine where his imagination imagined he would go.

So much for John Henry.

Henry John possessed a vivid imagination.

For instance —

If he saw the crude model of an invention he imagined it in its perfected form, making the work of the world lighter, easier, better.

Digitized by Google

If he looked at a waterfall he imagined it harnessed and turning the wheels of industry — furnishing light, heat and power.

If he ate a speckled trout he imagined himself hip-deep in the racing waters, with his fly on the wing and his eye awatch for the cast.

And thus it went.

There was nothing in his life, from sunrise to sunset, that his imagination did not seize upon, feed upon and grow upon.

Folks said he was an optimist. But he wasn't. It was his imagination — that vivid imagination that possessed him.

So Henry John went through life — dreaming dreams that came true — anticipating events that inevitably happened — seeing visions that turned to realities.

Finally he died — and his imagination saw smiling fields and laughing waters as he passed over.

So much for Henry John.

What kind of an imagination have you — a John Henry's or a Henry John's?

Isn't it worth imagining?

Digitized by Google

MY FRIEND

I HAVE a friend—such a friend as a man is sometimes blessed with, I think, to keep his faith sweet and steadfast.

This friend of mine is a friend in all that the word can convey.

External appearance means nothing to him. I could be unshaven, unkempt — one of the dregs and flotsam of humanity — and he would still be my friend.

Wealth means nothing to him. I am not wealthy in worldly goods, but I could lose the little I have, come down to a hovel and crust, and he would still be my friend.

What I am means nothing to him. I could lose the respect of my fellows, no longer deserve the love of my family, become a social outcast — aye, even a criminal — and he would still be my friend.

If I am happy he rejoices. If I am sad, he sympathizes with me. He knows my every mood and is responsive to it.

Sometimes — I am sorry to say — I am cross with him, and even abuse him. But he never complains and he never holds a grudge against me. I have only to smile — to show that my "peeve" is forgotten — and his brown eyes glow with love and gratitude.

In trial and affliction, in prosperity and success, in the sunshine and shadows of life, he is always the same — steadfast and true — the most devoted friend a man could have.

Digitized by Google

He is poor — as reckoned wealth goes — this friend of mine. And yet he is rich in many things that mere money cannot buy. And these riches of his he lavishes upon me — love, constancy, trust, and a belief that cannot be shaken.

To him I am the greatest man in the world. His eyes follow me until I am lost to his sight. At the sound of my voice he is a-quiver with joy. I know that without the slightest hesitancy he would gladly lay down his life for me or for mine.

I have such a friend — thank God!— and these words of mine are too futile to express my appreciation of him.

And yet he is not rare. Other men have friends like him. Other men know the beautiful comradeship of a friendship such as his. Other men will voice with me, all the sentiment I have expressed — for —

This friend of mine is my dog!

Digitized by Google

THE KILL-JOY

THE child of the tenements sat on the doorstep of the wretched, ramshackle building she called "home." Around her the midnoon heat throbbed against the pave. The multitudinous sounds of the street beat upon her ears. But she was unmindful of all else save a "dolly" which she held in her arms and clutched to her ragged breast now and again. In her gaunt eyes was a mother-light, born of that inherent instinct which knows not time, nor place, nor circumstance.

"Pooh! It's only a stick with a rag tied to it," said a voice.

A Kill-Joy spoke.

* * * * * * * * * *

She watched him as he swung with his old familiar stride down the street. Her thoughts were in a delicious tumult. It had all come to pass as she had dreamed it would. She was the happiest girl in the whole world. A stray wisp of light caught its reflection in the ring on her finger and darted away to tell its fellows. She laughed happily as she, too, caught the sparkle. Tomorrow, at the store, how surprised the girls would be.

"Pooh! It's nothing much to make a fuss over — probably only a chip," said a voice.

A Kill-Joy spoke.

* * * * * * * * * *

At forty he was down and — out! No — not *out* — he'd show them that he could come back! And he did. It was no easy fight — this starting over again and

Digitized by Google

climbing up to his old position. But he made it — and he won. The blood he sweat — and the rebuffs he met — these were experiences he wished for no man. But he was proud of his achievement — proud that he had accomplished what they told him couldn't be done.

"Pooh! Anyone with his luck could do the same thing," said a voice.

A Kill-Joy spoke.

* * * * * * * * * *

The Kill-Joys of life — how well we all know them. Whether our station be among the most high or with those who are lowly — the Kill-Joy dwells in our midst — to darken the day, to curdle the sweet, to blemish the perfect!

The Kill-Joy — unfortunate and unhappy being — thoughtless, malicious, envious, or vindictive — always the discordant note in the song of life!

The Kill-Joy — out of tune with happiness — bearer of roil and rue — sower of seeds of discontent that bear only a harvest of wormwood and thistles!

The Kill-Joy — may you find no converts among us!

Digitized by Google

THE CLOCK WATCHER

SOME one, long on experience and pithy in style, once upon a time expressed himself thus:

"If you never do more than you're paid for, you'll never be paid for more than you do."

Which — be it said earnestly — is an axiom that should be engraved upon the brow of that all too common *genus* — the clock watcher.

It was Elbert Hubbard who said, "If you work for a man, in Heaven's name work for him." Although he delivered himself of this pat truism in another connection, it applies equally well to our text with the addition of a few words. Let us phrase it thus:

"If you work eight hours for a man, in Heaven's name work eight hours for him."

The clock watcher is a time killer. He is a *soldier* in the ranks, and destined forever to *soldier* in the ranks until he leaves the ranks of *soldiers*.

The clock watcher gets on the job late — if he dares; and also leaves it early — if he dares. He counts the seconds, minutes, hours. With him a day invariably drags along, for he has one eye on its slightest movement.

The clock watcher never becomes interested in his work, for that would mean he was no longer a clock watcher. His slogan is to give the least he can for the most he can get — and beat every hour out of as many minutes as his ingenuity can devise.

Digitized by Google

I've used the pronoun "he" to describe the species.

That's unfair.

"She" is equally, if not more, applicable.

And she has greater opportunities to become an expert clock watcher. Has not some wise one said, "The female of the species is more deadly than the male"?

She must powder her nose, fuss with her hair, fix her shirt waist, stand at the water cooler, gossip in the washroom, manicure her nails, dilly-dally at her work — do a hundred and one things that eat into those *weary* hours of her occupation, so that the residue might be termed the dregs of a perfect day.

And always — of course — with one eye flirting with old Father Time or his son, Mr. Eight Hour Day.

Watch her — for she's an interesting study.

Four o'clock arrives and the hands of time slowly creep around to the half-after. There is a bustle of expectancy. Slower and slower they creep to the quarter-of. By this time she is ready — set — toes on mark — eager — every fibre of her being aquiver. For a race? Yes! The race to be first out of the building at the stroke of the bell that signals release.

It's a pathetic sight. Pathetic, for there is really an opportunity in the business for her. There is really something worth while ahead — in authority, in remuneration — if she could only overcome the habit of watching the clock, if she would only work with her mind on her work and put her heart into it.

Digitized by Google

Has what I have said seemed harsh?

It was meant to, for the clock watcher is a chronic. Whether he or she, no gentle hint will suffice. A jolt is required.

Time, next to life itself, is the most precious gift of God.

And in the span of an average life we can accomplish but little of the much that is to be done. Only as old age approaches, and our faculties become impaired, do we keenly appreciate all that we might have done with the days, the weeks, the months, the years, vouchsafed us.

Does it not behoove us, then, to employ every minute of our working hours eagerly and honestly — whether our labor and its fruits be bought and paid for by others or remain our own?

Forget the clock — forget it to the extent that its kindly reminder to quit comes almost as an intrusion.

A clock is an instrument of measurement. It measures time. But it also measures men — and women — and the measure it takes of you is the measure of how closely you watch it.

"A watched pot never boils." And a watched clock never smiles.

Digitized by Google

OBJECTIVES

AND as they journeyed toward the City of Ideals they came upon a Pilgrim plodding aimlessly along the road. "Whither art thou bound, Brother?" asked the first of them, for he perceived this man did not go their way. "Nowhere," replied the Pilgrim listlessly; "just traveling."

Idle some day and watch the World and his Wife go by. How readily you can perceive those who have a destination and those who have not. With purposeful stride the former quickly pass your range of vision. With lagging step and hesitant air the latter slowly move along.

You can write it down that no man was ever successful who did not have an objective — a goal to reach — an attainment to achieve.

Years ago when I was at a most impressionistic age I had the good fortune to have a real business man for a mentor. Of his good advice I recall much, but nothing so vividly as this:

"Set a goal for yourself; attaining it, set another. And keep your sights raised high."

He started life as a clerk in a little two-by-four store. His goal was to become proprietor. He attained it.

His was a specialty store. The natural result — the next step — was to become a manufacturer of the specialty he sold. He attained it.

Digitized by Google

From that point to become the leading manufacturer in his line — first, in his country, next in this country, finally, in the world. He attained all of those.

I have not talked with him for years. I do not know what goal he has set for himself now. But I do know that he has a goal, for he knows better than anyone else that the success he is today is directly traceable to setting a mark.

An objective in life gives you purpose, poise and push. You work for a cause and for an effect. You progress because you have a definite point to reach. You get there because when you are headed in a certain direction, and keep moving, you are bound to finally arrive. Simple, isn't it?

The man without an objective can be likened to the traveler who takes a train without knowing — or caring — where it goes; buys five dollars' worth of mileage and is ultimately put off at a water tank or a junction. The prospect of such devil-may-care adventuring may be alluring, but it creates no fire-sides whereat one may warm the shins in old age.

If I were starting my business life today I'd set a goal with my watch this morning. It might be no higher than that of the next clerkship in line, but at least it would be something definite to tie to, something tangible to work for. And after I'd reached it, I'd sight another objective. And so on and on until the possibilities and opportunities were exhausted. Then I'd seek new fields to conquer, for once the habit of setting a goal becomes established, there are no boundary lines.

Digitized by Google

All of which may bring the natural query: "What is your goal today?"

To which I will cannily reply: "I shall not tell you."

You might try to beat me to it.

Let me counter — "What is yours?"

Digitized by Google

THE VACANT CHAIR

SOME vacant chairs have a strange fascination to me. Such chairs have a personality. I cannot describe it. Those versed in the occult, might tell you I refer to an aura. Perhaps — but all I know of the sensation I experience when I feel drawn toward a vacant chair is that of some common humanness.

It matters little what the physical or æsthetic properties of such a chair may be. It can be of pine or rosewood and mahogany. It can be grossly utilitarian or charmingly ornamental. It can be one of a million fellows or possess the distinction of an original Chippendale.

These things are of no moment. All I know is that there are times when I avoid looking at vacant chairs, for they seem to be occupied — occupied by those I once knew — occupied as I feel sure they have really been times agone. And I can almost see familiar faces, hear familiar laughter and respond to familiar voices.

Not long ago I sat at a family dinner table. There was a vacant chair. There was always that vacant chair. It was a shrine — the shrine of one who was no more.

I had known the occupant in life. To sit at his board, to break bread with his family, to see constantly before me that vacant chair where he would have sat and where he was not — that was too much.

There were times when I saw those of the family who were seated about me, glance toward his chair. One

Digitized by Google

could read their thoughts; see the pain cross their eyes; feel the slight catch in their voices; note the sad refrain in their laughter.

The vacant chair!

How filled are the homes of the land with vacant chairs! Chairs where once there sat a loved one — a youth in the promise of his young manhood; a girl in the winsomeness of her 'teens; a father in the full flush of vigor and life; a mother in the quiet dignity of her matronhood.

The vacant chair! The chair with its well-worn arms, the rounded hollow in its upholstered back, the shiny leather of its seat, the scuff and scars on its legs and rounds!

As you gaze upon it, does not some transformation take place? Do not those other eyes of you — the eyes of imagination — see something that takes substance and shape — that rounds into familiar lines — that becomes the smiling face and the jovial self of the one whom you often recognized there?

I find it so with me.

And I am glad that thus it is. For whether the separation from a friend or loved one be that of distance or eternity, to be able to create the image and endow it with the actuality of the real, is to possess a gift that has much of solace in its pain. And yet —

The vacant chair!

May fortune grant it be long, happy years before I must conjure up in its emptiness the reality of you, my friend!

Digitized by Google

GREEN PASTURES

ONCE upon a time I had a neighbor who had a peculiar slant upon life. He always thought in terms of perspective. The things that were on the horizon, or a part of the other fellow's possessions, were always better than the things that were his.

To him, my yard was always better than his yard — the grass was greener, the flowers bloomed more profusely, the vegetables looked more like the illustrations in the seed catalog.

If we discussed business, he always wished he was in a line like mine, where trouble was a minus quantity and opportunity said "Tag, You're It!" at every corner.

Always he was discontented with what he had and sighed for those things others enjoyed. Thus he discounted himself, his ability, his opportunities, his advantages, his luck, his good fortune, and suffered the loss — financial and mental — that inevitably resulted.

The only things he never discounted were his troubles. He had more of those than any one he knew and, to his mind, they were the only things he could successfully accumulate.

The truth of the matter was that this neighbor of mine was no more fortunate or unfortunate than his neighbors. He had as nice a home, as happy a family, as many worldly possessions, as big a business opportunity, as good health — but he was afflicted with that prevalent malady of both men and women, *discontent.*

Digitized by Google

In his case it wasn't exactly envy and it wasn't covetousness. It was just a state of mind he had allowed himself to drift into. A state of mind that caused every pasture in life to look greener than the one wherein he grazed.

It was a sad state of affairs — and it is still a sad state of affairs, for he hasn't changed in the years since I had him for a neighbor. Only the other day I saw him and his first words, after greetings had been exchanged, voiced the wish that he might have another territory — the one next to his — for the sales opportunities there were ten times what he now had.

With me, you'll pity this unhappy man, for you know, as I do, that his troubles are imaginary — they are but phantoms of his own creation. To him there would be no meaning in that old saying: "I am an old man and have had many troubles, but most of them never happened."

But stop! Maybe — and remember I say, *maybe* — somewhere, sometime in your life, oh jaded reader, the other fellow's pastures have looked greener than your own, and there has been discontent with your lot in your heart.

If the supposition be true, then apply the sure remedy to the ill. Just vault the fence that separates you from the land of your heart's desire and, turning, view again the other side.

Then lightly, blithesomely vault you back again — for a cure should have been effected.

Digitized by Google

A MEMORIAL DAY EPIC

IN Fountain Town Memorial Day is a real event. There it is not a holiday in the accepted sense of the word, but a day that savors rather of religious rites — a day when communion is held with the past — a day of sacred memories to our elders and a lesson in patriotism to the younger generation.

It was on this day the boys of '61 came into their own again. Then they donned their old blue uniforms, carefully laid away between times for the occasion, and gathered at the G. A. R. Post in Memorial Hall to reminisce; to live again those days when they felt the urge of the hot blood of youth, shouldered a gun and marched away from loved ones to settle a controversy that had split a nation in twain.

It was on this day, too, they failed to see the familiar face of many a comrade they had greeted the year before and they realized as at no other time that theirs were numbered years — that they were but the residue of the thousands that once marched shoulder to shoulder with them.

So, in Fountain Town, Memorial Day is always a solemn occasion. One finds the gravity of the elders reflected in the children, and one realizes — as I think one must go to our small towns to realize — that here is the heart and the sympathy and the great human love of the nation.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Memorial Day in the Year of our Lord Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen dawned bright and clear. The

Digitized by Google

sky was that intense blue one sometimes finds on a perfect day in May; the sunshine was warming to the old bones of one, and the fresh green dress of trees and grass and shrubs formed a fitting setting for this day of tribute to the dead.

"Daddy" Prouty was up and out long before the rest of the household had stirred. "Mother" had pressed his uniform the night before and he had donned it with that little shiver of expectancy he always felt when the great event came each year.

Ordinarily he would have slept late into the morning, for his rheumatism had bothered him of late and he found it more and more an effort to get around.

But this morning it was different. There were things he wanted to think about — to think about alone — and he knew he would be undisturbed for an hour in his favorite seat in the garden.

So there he wended his way and sat down on a rustic bench in the early sunshine.

Through the years he had seen many days like this come and go. He had felt the full measure of their sorrow and their happiness. One by one the companions of his youth — the brave boys of his company — had gone to the camping ground Over There. And the feeling was upon him that his turn would be next.

He could not have told why this premonition was upon him, but he meant to grope it out. Hence this quiet hour alone.

This Memorial Day was different — somehow — and he knew wherein the difference lay. John, youngest son, was not there — not there to pat him on the

Digitized by Google

back as he started off — not there to say, as he used to say, "Goodbye, dad; show them you still can step it off with the best of 'em."

For John slept in Flanders Fields, as he had thought once — oh so long ago — he would sleep in the field of Gettysburg.

A tear stole down his wrinkled cheek. His head dropped lower and lower until it rested upon the handle of his cane.

John! John! Light of his life! The promise of his failing years! Blood of his blood! Flesh of his flesh! And gone!

Suddenly he straightened up. These were not a soldier's thoughts. His was a woman's weakness. John had died — as he in the years agone would have died — for his country. He had given — and been spared. John had given — and the gift had been accepted.

The Great Democracy! Had not both fought for the same principles — the same ends — the same great motives? John was gone, but he remained, and in him must be evidenced the courage and the patriotism that had ever been associated with the name.

A tender smile wreathed his lips. The anguish and the thought of death had passed away. In its stead there glowed in his fine old face the light that is the light that "passeth understanding."

* * * * * * * * * *

In the afternoon of that Memorial Day, as one watched the line of marchers slowly wend its way to-

Digitized by Google

ward our Calvary, one saw in the little group in front — a straggled group of blue-clad old men — one figure that stood out like a cameo — the figure of a proud old man, erect, soldierly and with eyes that ever looked beyond the horizon of the affairs of men.

And one saw not — if one understood — the Spanish-American veterans that followed, or the trim clad lads in khaki — for one realized that he had seen "the resurrection and the life."

And who shall say that side by side with that unfaltering figure in blue — step in step with him — there did not march the spirit of another — a soldier whose grave there was in Flanders Fields?

Digitized by Google

"DICTATED BUT NOT READ"

I PICKED up a letter that lay atop of this morning's mail. It was a long letter and an important letter. Neatly inscribed at the bottom of the final page were the significant words, "Dictated but not read."

No, you're wrong. This is not to be a dissertation on the subject of why so-called *business* men will permit important communications to go forth from their offices without the precaution of first assuring themselves that Gladys wrote exactly what they dictated, spelled the words correctly and punctuated the sentences according to Hoyle.

On the contrary —

I ran across an old friend recently — one I had not seen in years. But I knew more about him than he realized — never mind how — and I knew that his life and my letter had this in common — *both were dictated but not read.*

He was one of those individuals — of which there are many in the world — who starts out but fails to finish. In golf parlance, he never *"followed through."* He dictated his life, if you will accept the analogy, and then he absented himself from the administration offices.

He never stopped long enough to read himself; to see whether his dictation came out as he gave it; to catch the physical mistakes; to correct the mental errors after-thought made manifest.

As a consequence he blundered along, made enemies more easily than friends, and was always at a loss to

Digitized by Google

understand why people did not "get him" as he intended they should.

Dictated but not read!

How much of your life are you living as haphazardly as my friend is living his? Isn't it worth while to pause for a moment and take stock?

The things we plan, the things we do, the things we say, all have their aftermath as well as their initiative. To every alpha there is an omega. It is just as important to conclude as to begin. And the conclusion may have far more in it *for us*, for it includes not only the beginning but all that follows after — sometimes with far-reaching effects.

Dictated but not read!

Think of yourself the next time you read this statement — so indicative of undue haste — of carelessness — of indifference.

Then review your acts of the day and see how many you find that might truthfully be said to have been *dictated but not read.*

If you're honest with yourself — the surprise party will be yours.

Digitized by Google

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

WHAT *is* Success?

That question came to me the other evening when I had finished reading an account in the old-home paper of the life of a "prominent resident." It was what might be termed a "post-mortem," for he had recently died.

It told of his sterling qualities; of the friends he had made; of the good he had done; of the loss to the community, the church, the family; of his fraternal connections; of his business interests; of the hundred and one laudatory things that it is perhaps meet should be said of the dead.

But —

I lit my old briar and leaned back in my chair, lost in a maze of recollections.

Was he a success?

The town where he had lived was my old-home town; the town where I had spent the better part of my boyhood. I knew its every street and alleyway; I knew its folks — plain folks and rich folks; I knew its life — and I knew *him.* Knew him in the heyday of his beginnings, when he was giving promise of that *success* which was to crown his later years — the *success* which I had just reviewed.

And I traced his life, step by step, as I had known it. Traced it from the days when he was a school bully (later they toned it to "aggressiveness"); on through to

Digitized by Google

sharp young manhood, when he had tricked Kate into breaking her engagement with Alf, and then married her himself; on to the business his father had bequeathed him — a law practice — and there memories came, stark and unrelenting.

I recalled the day he had "sent up" Old Jason on evidence that was flimsy at best, and acquired his little farm (it completed his parcel) from the ruined family, within a few months thereafter. I recalled another day, too, when Granny Ganes was set out of her miserable cottage and found her way to the poor house, because "business was business"— *his* business. And so they came — incidents, scenes, pictures of the past, out of a memory that teemed with the host of them.

Then it all faded away, and another life came into my mind. A life that, too, had passed beyond, but with only a bare line among the death notices for an epitaph.

And I recalled other scenes and other ways, yet of the same familiar days. I recalled a fragile little man, who made but a scanty living, but who seemed to give and give, of himself and his meager possessions, whenever and wherever I could associate him.

He it was who nursed the sick through the days when pestilence visited our village; who seemed to sense where want or care or sorrow made itself manifest, and assuaged it in his humble fashion; whom little children and dumb creatures loved instinctively, and whom older folks were wont to shake their heads over and commiserate.

Digitized by Google

Then I compared the two. Just why I do not know, for before me was the evidence that one had achieved success, and certainly those who knew the other — if they can recall him — will tell you he was but an abject failure.

But —

What *is* success?

I have my opinion.

You must form your own.

Digitized by Google

CHANGING GEARS

YESTERDAY Joe Dokes — that name will do — changed gears. He went into high. For years Joe had been traveling in low gear. Whether it was fear of the increased gear ratio, or because he hadn't learned how to shift, or a low gear pace was sufficient for him, we don't know. But Joe, from the time we can first remember him, had been traveling in low gear.

We've always known that Joe's old bus had other gears; that it could speed up; that its manufacturer meant it to go through life at a faster clip than Joe drove it.

But Joe didn't seem to know. So Joe pegged along in low.

Yesterday Joe woke up. Just why or how I can't say. Perhaps it was because he saw so many of his friends slipping by him — slipping by with no better bus, no better motor than he had. Perhaps it was because something quickened his desire to get to a given point sooner than he had ever arrived there before. Perhaps it was because he had learned somewhere, of some one, how to make that shift to a higher gear.

Anyway, Joe is on his way now, going faster than he used to travel, doing it with greater ease and with less fuel consumption. And there's more confidence in his bearing, somehow, and he toots his horn oftener than he used to toot it.

Yes, Joe is traveling along — making headway — getting somewhere at last. And, strange to relate, I'm

Digitized by Google

not the only one who has noticed that Joe has at last shifted gears — several have mentioned it to me — mentioned it in a voice of surprise, as though they saw for the first time that Joe's old bus had other gears, was capable of more speed.

Yesterday John Doe — that name will serve — changed gears. He went into low.

For years John had been traveling in high gear. He was a speed artist. Nothing ever passed him. He seldom saw much of the scenery as he whizzed by, but he was always the first to arrive. Folks used to comment on how fast a life he led. Perhaps it was envy — for he outdistanced them. Perhaps it was fear — for he took many chances they wouldn't take. Perhaps it was caution — for they knew his motor wasn't the motor it was when he got it, and it was in the shop many times for over-hauling.

John always knew that he had other gears. He knew what they were for. He had used them — in times past — before he decided that speed was the thing, that speed got you there, that speed brought you in first, ahead of the bunch. But his other gears were long unused. He even started in high — on those seldom occasions when he stopped — and raced his engine to do it.

Yesterday John woke up. Just why I can't say. Perhaps it was because some Master Mechanic had warned him that he'd better ease up on the old bus. Perhaps it was because the pace was beginning to tell on his nerves. Perhaps it was because he saw a steep grade before him that even he knew couldn't be taken on high. Perhaps it was because he had remembered,

Digitized by Google

suddenly, that he had other gears — gears put there to be used for definite work.

Anyway, John is traveling along now at a slower pace. And he's seeing things he never saw before. His nerves don't jump as they used to jump. And he's taking the grades with ease, without strain, without fear that his motor will quit before he reaches the top.

Somehow, folks are taking note of John, too. I am not the only one. Several have mentioned it to me — mentioned it in a voice of surprise, as though they saw for the first time that John's old bus had other gears, could be slowed down.

Oh, Joe, it's good that you found yourself in time!

Oh, John, it's good that you found time to find yourself!

Digitized by Google

THE BACK-DOOR-MAN

NINE years ago I knew a man. He had everything that you and I and all reasonable folks could desire. He held a position of responsibility and trust with a big corporation. His home life was even, unbroken. He had brains, ability — and a boundless opportunity to make of life what he willed.

But he willed to go wrong. Not criminally, perhaps — but morally. He willed to show a streak of chrome yellow instead of true blue.

Never mind the circumstances of his change of life. They were circumstances that another man, of finer fibre, would have used as stepping stones to bridge events. But he, harkening back to his real self — the self he had successfully covered up and polished over for many years — did those things which business men find more difficult to forgive than criminal acts — for he betrayed trusts, and friendships, and bandied with faith as though it were an inconsequential thing.

Part of the things he did — the acts he committed — were done while he was still in the employ of the concern that had given him his opportunity. After he was out, the yellow in his nature showed even more marked, and at the very time he might have retrieved his past he only made a greater mockery of his word and tossed away the remnant of faith in him that remained in the hearts of those who had known him in the better days.

So he went his way — cast out from the back door of the house that had been his house; the house that

Digitized by Google

had honored him and the house that he had dishonored.

* * * * * * * * * *

Yesterday I saw him, after a lapse of years. He was jaunty, debonair, apparently a man of the world, prosperous and content.

But I knew those surface things — those appearances — for what they were — mere camouflage. In his face were lines that were not good to see — lines that charted what his life had been; that told the fruitlessness of the years; that spoke more eloquently than words of the vain quest, the hopeless prospect; the never-reached goal.

He was looking for a job. He has been looking for a job for a long, long time. This thing and that he has taken up, but they have only been the minor things, the crumbs from the table of business prosperity.

He has never "landed" the "big thing," the "main chance," the real opportunity — despite the obvious talents that are his.

And why?

Because on that fateful day, years ago, he deliberately destroyed that moral fibre which is the greatest component in the makeup of a man, and prostituted those talents to other ends — ends that have brought him naught in his after-life except the ashes of disappointed hopes and the dregs of never-filled desires.

Because — and herein is our lesson of the theme — our acts follow us like a nemesis where'er we go, and specter-like confront us on the threshold of the door of opportunity when we would enter.

Digitized by Google

Many times he has come upon the "real thing" — but always there has been that fateful query: "What were your past connections?" And because he cannot bridge with evasions those years he spent with that concern whose confidence he betrayed, he is forced to name them.

Then goes forth the query to that house: "What do you know of this man; his habits; his honesty; his morals; his responsibility?"

And even though the years have been kind and old wounds have healed and there is no spirit of vindictiveness — if ever such existed — in the former employers, business ethics demand an honest answer to that query.

So the past keeps pace with this unhappy man through his every day of the present and casts its shadow across his path.

How different all things might have been!

Had his exodus been through the front door of that concern there would ever be a cheery voice to bid him enter when he knocked, and a good word go forth when others asked the old-home folks concerning him.

But he's a back-door-man — an outcast and a derelict.

Digitized by Google

A PIPE

WHAT is there about a pipe that makes for something savoring of enchantment? Is it the tobacco? I think not, for one can smoke tobacco in divers other shapes and forms and never secure from it the soothing balm that emanates from an old, well-seasoned pipe.

Is it the pipe itself? Perhaps, in part. For pipes are not the same and what is one smoker's pleasure in them is another's poison.

No, it must be a combination of the two and the expression of the smoker's individuality which they permit.

When you smoke a cigar or a cigarette, it soon ashes to the end. The pleasure you find in it is evanescent.

But not so with a pipe. When you have carefully packed it with your favorite tobacco, applied the match, taken those first few long puffs to insure that it is well lighted, you are only at the beginning of your enjoyment. When it is smoked out you can always refill it and continue the enchantment.

Ah, now we are getting at it. A pipe is a companion — something that fits our mood, whether grave or gay, and with which we can freely share our sorrows or our happiness, with the realization that, like a genii, it is ever ready at our bidding.

Whether you prefer an English briar, an American cob, a Dutch clay, a curved calabash or a carved meerschaum is a matter of your individual taste. Each has its advocate — each wins its friends.

Digitized by Google

Whether you prefer domestic or imported tobacco, plug cut, cube cut, shredded or even scrap, matters not. Each has its flavor — each suits some taste.

But, regardless of the medium in pipe smoking, when you start the tasks of the day, with what zest you load the bowl of the old "dudeen" with your favorite "brand" and plunge in. So, through the morning, you draw comfort and inspiration from the same source.

At noon, after lunch, you may fall from grace and smoke a cigar or cigarette, but back on the job again, in the midst of the day's activities, there is nothing like that blackened, caked old pipe to smoothe perplexities and problems.

Then, in the evening, after a good dinner, what better companionship can you desire than your faithful friend, glowing softly in the dusk of the evening as you take your earned rest in a comfortable chair?

Puff, puff, puff — morning, noon-time and night. With whom are you closer than your favorite pipe? Creator and confidant of your dreams! What inspiration you draw through its slender bit! What soothing balm it brings to your troubled soul.

I am constrained, even at the expense of the accusation of waxing sentimental, to quote these lines of James Gleason, a true pipe lover, written years ago:

My pipe is peace to me
On languid summer eves,
When zephyrs steal with lazy flight,
Nor scarcely hymn the brooding night,
Nor wake the sleeping leaves:
Some sullen vagary
Encoils me in her pensive chain,

Digitized by Google

And knits me with the past again —
I puff my clay — the chain is broke,
And broken, passes off in smoke!

My pipe is peace to me
On wintry nights and chill,
As speeds the flaky tempest past;
When all without is soughing blast,
And all within is still:
In poet's company
I tread my several ways along
The verdant paths of vernal song —
I puff my clay — the song is done,
And puffing breathe a benison.

But — there — my pipe is out!

Digitized by Google

THE OLD SWIMMING HOLE

YOU gained the corner of the barn and looked behind. No one was in sight. The coast was clear and your bare feet fairly twinkled as you streaked it for the creek, a full mile from the house.

There were tasks undone on that Saturday afternoon. But it was hot — insufferably hot — and a boy couldn't be expected to work all the time, could he?

"No," a little voice within you prompted — not when it was June, and it was hot and the old swimming hole called to all the boy that was within you.

"Yes," admonished another little voice—for these were your Saturday tasks — duties to be performed — and there would be plenty of time for play some other day.

But the first little voice won out, as I'm afraid it had a way of winning out. And your truancy had begun.

Through the "South Field," where the early corn was making a record in the heat, you made a fast sprint. Then, over the rail fence, a short distance on, and you were at the creek, safely concealed among the willows and elders.

There, beneath the shade of a big oak tree, was the swimming hole — a famous one the boys of the neighborhood had made possible through the construction of a mud-and-sod dam — with cool depths that promised exquisite relief to your parched body.

Off with the big straw hat, the old hickory shirt, the wellworn overalls. A short run across the green bank,

Digitized by Google

a spring from the crude spring board — a splash! — and you disappeared for an instant in the cool waters.

Wasn't it glorious! You swam around "dog fashion;" you tried the "crawl" a city boy the year before had taught you; you floated. All the stunts and tricks you had learned from your associates were practiced time and again. You envied no man, with his tile lined tank or his ocean beach, for in your boy kingdom there was this old swimming hole and here was happiness beyond compare.

Presently you heard shouts in the distance and as they came closer you saw that other boys of the neighborhood, too, had answered the call. In a twinkling — off with their clothes — a succession of splashes — and they were enjoying the sport with you.

Then followed contests of skill —"follow the leader" — "take a dare"— and all the old familiar games of the swimming hole.

Time passed — the afternoon waned — and still you lingered. Perhaps it was to put off the reckoning to come — perhaps you simply forgot the passage of time, as boys do. Anyway the others were out, dried off, dressed and gone on their laughing way before you reluctantly circled the hole for the last time and climbed up the bank.

Then — what a discovery!

Shirt and overalls tied into knots — wet knots — such as only the ingenuity of mischievous boys could devise.

And across the fields — faint, yet clear — you heard derisive shouts —"Chaw Beef! — Chaw Beef! —Chaw Beef!"

Digitized by Google

So you "chawed!"

Reluctantly you turned your face homeward, after the difficulties of dressing had been solved, while that still small voice — silenced for so long — kept saying over and over again — "You'll get it now! You'll get it now! You'll get it now!"

But you didn't!

You didn't know, but father had seen your "get-away;" had later on watched you through the fringe of the elders, and had felt the call of his youth just as you had felt the call of yours.

Father, too, knew boys as only such fathers can know them. And father knew that little voice would never give you rest until you had made up in overflowing measure all the work you had slighted.

So father said nothing — albeit there was a twinkle in his eye you did not see and if you had seen you would not have understood.

The old swimming hole!

Darn the complexities of life, anyway.

After all, for the things we have lost are we compensated by the things we have gained?

Sometimes I think not — not on hot days when an electric fan is but poor solace for vanished joys in that paradise of youth.

Digitized by Google

THE BROKEN HEART

THE news came to me in a roundabout way. A friend told a friend; he told another, and so on it traveled until I heard it.

Not that it was of such vast importance — no! It was just one of those little things that one hears with some surprise, comments upon, mentions a few times and then erases from the mind.

John Doe had resigned from the Blank Company.

Certainly that of itself, was neither startling nor extraordinary. Resignations take place in the business world every day. But, somehow, I sensed a story behind this particular case, for I knew John, I knew his concern, and, more important still, I *knew* his Chief.

A day or so ago I had lunch at the Club and John came over to my table. I noticed that he was not himself. There was an air of abstraction about him — almost a melancholy — that was unnatural.

"John, they tell me you've resigned," I said.

"Yes, it's true," he replied.

We sat for a few moments in silence.

Then he began:

"You probably wonder why," he said, "and because you knew the circumstances eight years ago when I went there, and because you know in part what has been accomplished since, and because you know the 'Old

Digitized by Google

Man,' I'm going to tell you about it. Besides, I've got to spill it to some one, and it might as well be you."

He paused, and then in a voice in which there was a pathetic tragedy, he exclaimed:

"*They broke my heart*!"

A business man and a broken heart. One conjures up a love affair or the "eternal triangle" when these are coupled. But wait —

Then he unfolded the story — such a story as many a man has lived, as many a man is living; but always a tale that leaves the hearer with the prayer, "Please God, may this never happen to me."

In brief, he narrated this — except that I have filled in with my own conclusions those gaps where modesty and loyalty caused omissions:

In the days when he first went into the business it was comparatively small and he had thrown himself into it, body and heart and soul. He lived it, breathed it, dreamed it. Early and late he was on the job. It was both his work and his play. And with this devotion to its interests he gave an intense loyalty that amounted to what in other men might have been their religion.

So, as time went on, the business grew and prospered. It expanded into larger quarters. It added new lines. It became a highly profitable, going concern.

John prospered with it, to some measure; but the one who prospered most was the "Old Man," his Chief, for it was practically a one-man concern, insofar as ownership was concerned.

Digitized by Google

And, like wine, prosperity and success went to the "Old Man's" head. He was a round plug in a square hole — built for small things and incapable of increasing his dimensions to take care of large ones — but because he owned the hole the matter of fit never entered his mind.

He grew arrogant, domineering, intolerant, vain. And because such things are a part of the program of small-gauge men, he took all the credit for the concern's success to himself, and completely overlooked those who had labored and thought and planned and wrought for him — John notably among the others.

So the trouble started, two years before it ended — for John — in a resignation.

There was scarcely a day of those years that he did not "ride him" — harass, annoy, ridicule, belittle and slight him. And John took it all.

"Why?" you query.

"Why?" indeed! John himself scarcely knew — although in the meantime he had gone into debt for a home, and this obligation to his family, and the thought of starting all over again with some other concern, was probably the cautioning influence that made him hold on and hope for better things.

After all, however, it wasn't *that*. I know it — and I think John knows it, too.

He held on — endured those idiosyncrasies (to be charitable) of the "Old Man"—for one reason, one real reason, and one only — an unwavering loyalty: the kind of loyalty that a woman has sometimes for a man who is unworthy of her, or that a mother falls back upon to gloss over the glaring faults of her son.

Digitized by Google

That business was his heart's blood, for his heart's blood had gone into its upbuilding. It was everything to him — his child, his faith, his life. He was willing to endure much *in* it, for he had endured more, perhaps, *for* it.

But there came a day — just a few days before John talked to me. What happened on that day I do not know and he did not tell me — it seemed too painful a subject. Something must have snapped — the tension in such a situation could not last indefinitely. After all, the big events in our lives are only built upon a succession of minor ones — whether the culmination be a tragedy or an epoch.

They had broken his heart!

Better, by far, to put the blame where it lies — the "Old Man" broke his heart. The "Old Man" who was drunken with success and who could not see, and never will see, the injustice — the cruelty — in the act of breaking a faithful heart.

John will go to other fields. He will serve his new connection loyally and well, for that is the nature of the man. He will prosper and he will grow. Time will heal this wound. But he will never be the John he once was. He will never be able to put into another business the life blood and the heart blood that he put into the old —

For the best part of him was murdered — in cold blood — and his murderer goes scot free, respected and honored among men.

Is it fair?

I leave it to you.

Digitized by Google

THE STOPPING OF THE CLOCK

LAST night as I sat reading, alone, suddenly my mind wandered from the theme of the text; something bore down upon me that was startling in its very indefiniteness.

I paused, looked up and around, the sensation was curious. I was seemingly detached from my surroundings, yet nothing save the familiar scene of a comfortable living room met my gaze.

What was it? What had happened to bring me from the depth I was buried in my book to a sudden, alert sense of something — something new, strange, almost uncanny!

The clock had stopped — that's all!

And then, dimly, there came back to me some verses I had read somewhere, some time, that were at the moment most apropos:

"The clock has stopped! Yet why have I so found
An instant feeling like dismay?
Why note its silence sooner than its sound,
For it has ticked all day?

"So many a life beside my own goes on,
And such companionship unheeded keep,
Companionship scarce recognized till gone
And lost in sudden sleep."

It came to me then, as such things sometimes do come to one, that in those verses, so curiously recalled to mind, there was an epitome of human fellowship.

You and I have many a life that beside our own goes on, that "such companionship unheeded keep"— a companionship we fail to recognize until it is no more.

Digitized by Google

Familiar men, familiar ways, familiar acts — we accept them as a matter of course — as "the blessings Heaven daily grants"— little realizing what they mean to us until they are gone.

It is well, now and then, to pause in the rush of life and give the value that is due the verities that are so much a part of all that is worth while, ere the "stopping of the clock" brings our negligence home to us.

The companionships of life! Aren't they, after all, much of the sum and substance of that which makes life worth while? Aren't they golden argosies of friendship that bring home to us the wealth of the Indies — a treasure of human happiness.

The companionships of life! So little heeded — so seldom thought of — so often accepted as a matter of course!

We are so utterly dependent upon one another, and yet so sublimely independent. We unconsciously lean upon a hundred others as we travel through the days; yet we so consciously feel that we are sufficient unto ourselves.

We are delightful egotists — viewed through the binoculars of humor.

The ticking of a clock!

A simple, homely thing of itself — the repetition of a sound the ears grow so accustomed to that it must cease to make an impression.

The companionships of life — the repetition of little friendly acts one grows so accustomed to that they must cease to make an impression!

Digitized by Google

It should not be so!

It need not be so!

Let us be cognizant of the human heart — the warm handclasp — the cheery voice — the welcoming smile — the lighting eye — all that companionship — that fellowship means — before it is too late.

Before the clock has stopped, let us say!

Digitized by Google

A MAY FANCY

WAS it the trill of a bird, the pleasant sizzle of a frying pan, a happy laugh from a near-by tent that aroused me to a consciousness of my surroundings? I do not know. But a moment later I was fully awake, had flung aside the blankets and was out in the open, to await my turn at the basin and towel.

Breakfast — how tantalizing and appetizing the odor — was dispatched in a jiffy by the hungry crew that attacked it — my companions, the guides and myself.

Then off to the canoes, with tackle and kit, eager and ready for the sport of the day.

The sun was lighting the east with rosy beams; there was the carol of the birds in the brush; the trees, the greenery, even the rocks seemed to glow with the light of the dawn.

I found my place in the canoe, while Joe sent her skimming from shore with deft strokes of his paddle. The waters rippled and danced before us. The trees nodded a friendly farewell. The swooping gulls admonished us not to forget them.

The adventures of the day had begun.

I made my first cast near an old log across the lake from the camp.

The reel sung pleasantly, the red fly flashed through the air, hit with a faint splash and then came skimming back over the green waters as I reeled it in.

Digitized by Google

Again! — and again!

Then! — a shot of silver, a quick dart, a sudden strike, and the electric thrill that travels along a silken line when a bass has matched wits with a fisherman.

That thrill! Who can describe it? It reaches the hands, the arms; it mounts to the brain; it quickens the beat of the pulse; it brings a sparkle to the eyes, a flush to the cheeks, a song to the heart.

To keep the line taut. Ah, that was the trick. To outmatch his maneuvers; to outguess his defense; to outgeneral his fight.

So the struggle was on — give and take. One moment to play him with line — the next reel it in. One moment watch him expectantly as he flung himself in the air, shaking his head — the next follow his course, as he darted this way and that.

Here was zest — here was sport! — here was life!

Then, finally, as he tired with his struggles, I brought him in where Joe could make use of the landing net.

The first of the day! A beauty! Four pounds if an ounce!

So we ranged on. Sometimes with luck. Sometimes out of it. But always with the zip and the zest of the quest; the tang and the tinge of the great out-of-doors, and the spirit and sense of a rare day of days.

Morning, noontide and twilight. The hours ran along till the short day was done. Then, turning, we sought the distant campfire that beckoned through the dusk.

Digitized by Google

Tired! — happy! — hungry!

After supper we gathered around the blazing logs to live it all over again — to snatch a moment of Joy, ere she should be on the wing. While about us the infinite hosts of the night gave serenade and the stars looked down with twinkling eyes upon "tired business men" who were healthfully tired with the tire of real play in the nursery of Nature.

* * * * * * * * * *

I looked up. The scene faded — dissolved — was gone — the details of the office met my eyes.

"Will you please sign this requisition?" asked a voice from somewhere — and I was back in the world of business again.

Doggone the luck!

Digitized by Google

LOYALTY

OF all the business sins of which a man may be guilty, it seems to me that disloyalty comes very near the peak.

You work for a man, or a firm, and you receive a certain wage or compensation for it. True, that wage or compensation does not give that man or firm absolute possession of your mind, soul and body; but it does give the fruits of these as they apply to the business in which you are engaged —

Your mental effort —

Your physical effort.

And if to these you cannot add loyalty — unwavering loyalty — then you have no right to accept what you are paid, whether much or little — and if you do accept it you are a cheater — cheating yourself, your fellow-workers and your employer.

The synonyms of loyalty are fidelity, faithfulness, constancy and devotion. They're good words to tie to, to live up to, to mold your character upon.

Not long ago, while traveling, I had as a seat companion in the Pullman a man who is employed by a concern that had done some work for me. I knew his superior — his "boss," so to speak — and I thought I knew him.

But I didn't.

We chatted about current affairs for a time, and then the conversation veered around to business, as such discussions always do.

Digitized by Google

He started in on his concern and roasted it well-done. It was a "rotten" firm. He was underpaid. Others "grabbed off" all the credit for his accomplishments. The "boss" was down on him. He got all the dirty work that was to be done. They were slave-drivers —

And so on and on for almost an hour.

I let him run down; get it out of his system; relieve himself of the bile.

Then I told him a few things — simply, plainly, succinctly.

I had been a customer of his house. He knew that. He knew, too, that my business had been placed, in part, upon impressions — impressions of the character, the standing, the integrity, of the house and of its principals.

And he sought to tear down the structure they had carefully built up; to blacken that character; to lower that standing; to bring a doubt of that integrity.

I pointed out — and I'm sure that I did not mince words — that he was a business assassin; that he was contemptible, for he dishonored his house if it was not what he intimated and he dishonored himself if it was and he continued in its employ.

And so I talked to him — lectured if you please — until I had exhausted the counter-emotions his criticisms had raised.

He grew red and white by turns. But he took it — took it because at heart he was not rotten; because with him there was some of the thoughtlessness and

Digitized by Google

laxity of tongue that youth seems heir to. At heart he was sound; at heart he realized he was wrong, and from the heart out he finally spoke.

He came through like a man.

And I was glad that this thing came to pass. For all the while I knew that his "boss" knew his disloyalty, and the rope was being played out for the hanging.

Today that man is a different man. His "I" has been changed to "we;" his "my" to "our," and he is honest with himself and with his firm. He has been promoted — given greater responsibilities — and his pay has been "raised" accordingly.

Say a word against his house and he will fight "at the drop of a hat."

His "boss" realizes the change — has commented upon it to me — but he does not know what wrought it.

I think that I know. At least I like to feel that the incident I've referred to had something to do with it. After all, however, it was the man himself. One cannot make a rotten apple sound.

Have I been preaching?

I didn't intend to.

You don't need it.

Digitized by Google

WRITERS OF LETTERS

WE are all writers of letters. We dictate them, to Myrtle or Gladys or Ethel — occasionally we actually pen them — and when they're finished we sign our name, with a big or little flourish, and they go out into the city, into the state, into the country, into the world.

And when they go a part of us goes with them. A part of us that *is* us, *is not* us, or is *what we would have others believe we are.*

If the day starts wrong — with a grouch generated the night before, or because some jolt has jarred us from the "even tenor" of our ways — then into our letters goes a bit of that disagreeable or savage mood.

If the day starts right — with a smile and a quick step and a cheery "good morning"— with the spirit of the "glad to be alive" folks — then into our letters goes some of that warmth and cheer and happiness that is in our heart.

We are all writers of letters. Letters that advertise us to those we know and those we've never met. Letters that "unsell" us or keep us "sold" to those who receive them. Letters that leave our hands like singing birds, or cawing crows, or hooting owls. Letters that fly away, beyond recall — beyond the vain regret that may later come when they've taken passage.

So they go forth each day. And those who receive them react to the message we've sent. Those born of the day that starts wrong carry some of our troubled

Digitized by Google

spirit into others' lives and perhaps cast a shadow on their bright hour. Those of the day that starts right may bring some of our sunshine and cheer into the dark hours of those who read them.

Oh writers of letters, how important your task! How infinitely more in the epistles you write than words, sentences, paragraphs! How boundless your opportunity to serve — the best that is in you and the best that is in those you address!

Apply to yourself.

There are letters you receive that re-make the day. Letters that visualize their writer to you — with outstretched hand, with sunny smile, with cheery fellowship. Letters that make you feel you know their author as a friend — a boon companion for a while-away hour, when occasion may create the opportunity. Letters that take you from the "desk's dry wood" and project you across the miles to the side of a brother in the great fraternity of life.

There are other letters, too. Letters that raise a frown, that cause a tightening of the lips, that bring a glow of resentment in your heart. Letters that are cold, cheerless, lifeless, gray. "Good fellows" may have written them — but how are you to know? Across the space, to you, there come those pulsations of another's life — pulsations that are tuned to bring the sharp retort, the unkind word, the uninspired reply.

Writers of letters — take heed! As you sit at your desk on this morning, with the day's correspondence at hand, *be yourself* — the sunny self that makes you

Digitized by Google

business friends — and let that real self of you go out in those letters of yours.

Then it shall come to pass — oh writers of letters! — that you will so contribute to them from the wealth of your nature that the wealth of their nature — and pocket — will come home to you.

Do you doubt?

Try it today.

Digitized by Google

TOO LATE!

THE minister's voice had ceased — his masterpiece of eulogy had been spoken — his tribute to the dead had been paid — *paid to the living.*

Everywhere — in the room where he lay — in the house that had been his — in the resplendent box where they had placed all that remained of him — were flowers. Flowers that filled the air with their heavy perfume — flowers that were wondrously beautiful and rare — flowers that would have delighted him, for he loved them. But flowers whose beauty and fragrance were beyond his ken — flowers laid at the feet of the dead — *laid there for the living.*

Too late!

Why is it so — why must it always be so — that we voice the praise and present the flowers when the ears hear not, and the eyes see not, and the senses know not?

Is it just?

If a man deserves our words of praise — if he deserves our tribute of flowers — how much keener the appreciation of them — how much more the happiness to be found in them — when presented to him in life instead of at death.

We are prone to withhold the kindly word, the timely compliment, the note of praise. We know, we speak, we feel — to others. But to the one whose work, or deeds, or life inspires our commendation our voice is silent.

Digitized by Google

Merited praise is *merited praise*, and inspired flattery is *inspired flattery*, and sickening gush is *sickening gush* — but of these *merited praise* is real and human — coin that is as precious gold to the living and as worthless counterfeit to the dead.

Yet we should know and we should understand and we should appreciate these things, for we have instances in our own life that bear upon them—instances when we were the recipient of praise, of pleasant things, pleasantly said to ears that eagerly heard them. Instances when words of commendation spurred us to the achievement of greater things; brightened us through the days; made the heavy task seem light; fired us with eagerness to again deserve.

You who manage men. You who pride yourselves upon your knowledge of human nature. You — *you* — should know that praise — *merited, judicious praise* — is the most efficient tool in your managerial kit — a tool that if allowed to rust through lack of use reflects upon your ability as a master workman; or, if used too late, cannot repair the damage that its disuse has wrought.

Once upon a time I heard of a man who, it seems to me, had something on us all. Each day his secretary brought to his attention any items that told of the success of other men. Perhaps the announcement that Jones had been promoted to this, or Smith had accomplished that, or Brown had done some notable thing. If he knew Jones or Smith or Brown, a letter went forth with a word of praise for the promotion or the accomplishment or the deed. *Flowers to the living.*

And it seems to me that this was a happy thing to do, for it must have gladdened both the kindly heart that

Digitized by Google

thought of it and doubly gladdened the hungry heart that had learned through bitter experience never to expect it.

Too late!

Let us not always be too late. Let us resolve today that we will speak the deserved word and tender the merited bouquet — *to the living.*

For mayhap it shall come to pass that, in turn, there will come to us words that our ears will give welcome to and flowers that our senses will revel in —

Not too late.

Digitized by Google

THE RACE OF MEN TO BE

HE was magnificent in his virile manhood. As he towered above me, in his great rugged strength; clear-eyed, self-reliant and a very master of his destiny, I felt the insignificant thing I was.

A moment before I had been reading a book of philosophy — the strange musings of some poor, distorted brain, it seemed to me — and had closed the book to rest my eyes. Then, suddenly, he took shape from the shadows of my study lamp and I looked into his clear, calm eyes.

Yet I was not afraid. I think there was but a vast wonder in my face as I gazed at him. It was all so sudden — his presence — and so unexpected.

Then the title of the book fell across my vision — and I understood. "The Race of Men to Be" it read. Surely this was the embodiment before me.

"You know me now, I see," he said with a friendly smile. "I have known you for a very long time."

"I know you — yes;" I said, "but the wonder of you only grows. You are of the race of men to be, but why have you honored me with your presence and what has made you like and vet unlike the type of men who are akin to me?"

He smiled again. "You are as a child that asks a question and then answers it. I am here because I am unlike your type of man.

"What I am," he continued, "is not of my own making. I am a product of evolution. I grew out of

Digitized by Google

unrest, out of mental and spiritual awakening. Through organization I was born. The fellowship of men was my father. My mother was a great human love. I am what you would be a century from now."

The philosophy of the book had taught me that. The way was not so clear. I caught his eyes again. "More," I said, for the problem he had touched upon interested me.

"You cannot understand," he said gently, "for it is not yet given you to understand. You are but a drop in the great melting pot of the races. Out of this fusion of the best of men, and the worst, I have come. You cannot grasp the result, which is I, since the result to you is not yet. About you are men of varying intellect, yet all are men; some speak strange tongues; some have strange customs; some have the reach of high ideals; some are akin to animals. You are one of a species. Yet you, and others like you, are contributing to that common type, that higher type, that ideal type, which is the type of the race to be.

"I have come to you that you might have the incentive of the end. Before you, from this hour, must be me. You must labor now as you have never labored before that I may be born. I must be your dream of life, the goal you labor for and never reach. Through you, and such as you, the coming race of men shall be as I. No worthier motive could you have, no greater purpose for the life that has been given you. To every higher plane you lift yourself, just that much nearer you come to me. I bid you put all of yourself in your life; I bid you broaden and expand; I bid you give that you may receive more to give; I bid you learn

Digitized by Google

that you may teach; I bid you suffer that you may console; I bid you love that you may love yet more; I bid you go down that you may lift up, and, finally, I bid you make of me your one ideal, that through you I may finally come to be and do."

He was gone. But his impress remained. So to you I bring his message that you may help me in the task he has set my hand to do, and, in helping me, make for that greater universal brotherhood which is the race of men to be.

Digitized by Google

THE FORGOTTEN CHILD

THE place where the Forgotten Child lived was a place of poverty. One reached it through narrow alley-ways, along tortuous passages, past noisome courts and areas.

Squalor was always everywhere; squalor and neglect. The buildings were grimy, weather-beaten structures crowded one against the other; old hags of tenements, filthy, gloomy, foreboding. The streets thereabouts—if streets they might be called—were roughly paved with blocks of stone, worn into hollows with the daily passage of countless slouching feet. Little puddles of brackish water, half frozen over, lay about and all around were mounds of dirt and refuse.

It was evening—Christmas Eve—and the night gave promise of an early snow. The street lights, placed at an occasional corner, only intensified the miserable surroundings and made sharper the contrast with the Avenue above. Here, indeed, dwelt the poorest of the poor; the problems of the city; the dregs, the flotsam, the riffraff of humanity.

Through these miserable surroundings—her playground in the summer days—the Forgotten Child dragged her weary feet. All the long afternoon she had followed the crowds before the big stores many blocks away and with pinched face against the cold glass of the great windows feasted her eyes on the wonderful dreamland of toys.

Even now as she stumbled along she could close her eyes and glimpse that fairyland. Beautiful dollies,

Digitized by Google

with eyes that opened and shut and long golden hair; little beds where their mammas might put them to sleep; wonderful dishes, with pretty flowers painted on them; real tables and ever so cunning chairs, hats and dresses, and even furs like the rich ladies wore—was there anything lacking! Oh, it all passed before her in a most bewildering array, and with it the sparkle and glitter and glimmer of Christmas trees, soft lights and such truly make-believe snow.

Santa Claus, too, she had seen. She had even ventured to touch his shaggy fur coat as he passed by her on the street. How her heart had thumped as she did so. She wondered if he had heard her whispered prayer—for a dolly, just a very cheap dolly; one he would never miss, surely.

Of course, she had little hope that he had heard. Her mamma had said, only a day ago, that it seemed God had forgotten them—so Santa must have forgotten too.

So she came to the door of one of the most disreputable of the tenements, and, picking her way past a drunken man huddled on its stoop, mounted the narrow, winding flight of stairs that led to "home."

At the very top she pushed open the door and entered a room. An oil lamp feebly revealed its interior. The walls were cracked and only a few pieces of battered furniture relieved their barrenness. But, withal, the place was clean.

A woman was seated at a table, her hands folded in her lap and her body relaxed with a great weariness. From early morning she had labored for this "home" and the child, and she was very, very tired.

Digitized by Google

To her the Child went, without words. The woman stooped and kissed her and pressed her close, with arms that had a convulsive tremor in them. Later she placed a plate before her—a few scraps of cold meat and a piece of bread. There was nothing more in the house.

Her scanty meal finished, the Child slowly undressed. Her thoughts were long, long thoughts. Dimly she understood the burden of life and through silence strove to take a share.

When she was quite ready for bed, she timidly placed one stocking across the foot-board—perhaps Santa *would* remember, after all—and then drew the ragged coverlid close about her.

The woman watched her with a pathetic tenderness. At this little act of childish faith her eyes grew heavy with a weight of unshed tears and she quickly crossed the room and kissed the Child's wan cheek.

Afterwhile—but what matter afterwhiles in the homes of Forgotten Children!

* * * * * * * * * *

Christmas day dawned bright and clear. Out in the city all was cheer and happiness. Little, remembered children scampered from their soft, white beds and with laugh and shout brought forth the treasures of their well-filled stockings.

But as the morning light streamed into the face of the Forgotten Child and she slowly opened her eyes, there was no treasure trove to meet their expectancy. Only an empty stocking and a cold and barren room.

Digitized by Google

In her face there came the pitiful light of a shattered faith as she slowly clambered from the bed, and, clasping the empty stocking, buried her face in her arms and shook with dry, convulsive sobs.

* * * * * * * * * *

"Suffer little children to come unto me"—faint and sweet, the chant of a distant choir!

The broken heart of a little child!

And in the city—the thoughtless city—a thousand hearts that might have grown tender with sympathy, had they but known! But in the room the Forgotten Child and an empty stocking!

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

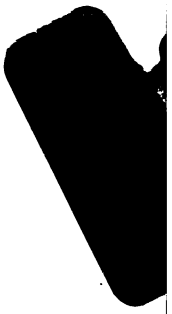
Digitized by Google

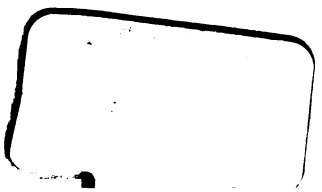
Digitized by Google

This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.





Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google